Gay rights/'Equality' tops Osborn's agenda

From B1

Yet gays are also facing fierce backlash on two fronts: the fight over President Clinton's plan to lift the ban on gays in the military and the spread of Amendment 2-style initiatives across the nation.

Amendment 2, approved by voters in November, is the measure that bans laws that protect homosexuals from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The Springs-based group Colorado for Family Values was the author of the measure, and its victory in Colorado has sparked groups in at least six other states to begin work on similar ballot measures.

Osborn agrees with a oft-repeated claim by both opponents and supporters of gay rights: Homosexuality will be a major issue of the '90s. "This is the decade that America will grapple with its uneasy relationship with gay and lesbian America," she declared.

Osborn: "Everybody knows somebody who is gay and lesbian."

And why will gay rights supporters win? "Because gays and lesbians are coming out," she said. "And that, I tell you, will debunk all of the myths that the right wing is spreading."

She said gays and lesbian are coming out precisely because of the threats they see in measures like Amendment 2.

"The religious right have been able to exploit the fact that less than 25 percent of American think they know somebody who is gay or lesbian," she said. "Let me tell you something, everybody knows somebody who is gay and lesbian. They just don't realize it."

She predicts by the year 2000 that 70 percent of Americans will accept homosexuals openly.

She also is confident Clinton will keep his promise of lifting the ban on gays in the military.

The 42-year-old Osborn is painfully familiar with the process of coming out. Although she knew she was a lesbian at age 15, she didn't admit it publicly until she was in her 20s.

In fact, before doing so, she gave a speech denouncing lesbians as a threat to the woman's movement while a college student at Vermont's Middlebury College. "That's how deep a gay and lesbian can hate themselves if they want to conform. It's terribly destructive," she said.

"That same night I was with a woman. No one should have to lie to themselves like that."

Shortly after that, she became active in gay rights. Her claim to fame among the gay community is how she transformed the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center into the nation's largest social service agency for gays and lesbians before leaving two months ago to head the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Nowadays, Osborn is able to toss off the words and images so many of her opponents attempt to use against gays with uncommon ease:

- "Our agenda is extremely militant — it's equality, nothing more and nothing less."
- "I love drag queens. They are a campy part of gay culture. Only the far right wing is ignorant enough to think they represent what all gays and lesbians are like."
- "Queers are different. And I like using that word now to take it away from the homophobes who use it as a weapon. Just like the Irish are different and Latinos are different and just like everybody's background gives them a certain sensibility. Queers . . . have that, too."

But despite being comfortable with her sexuality, she realizes the rest of society is not as tolerant. If she were on a date in Colorado Springs, she admitted, she wouldn't be comfortable enough to hold the hand of her escort in public.

"I would probably feel that it would make other people uncomfortable. Like it was some sort of political statement and not the natural act that it is."

Then, smiling and looking the interviewer in the eye, she added in a calm and self-assured tone:

"But someday people will. I have no doubt in my mind of that."

BACK ISSUES

10 years ago

A 12-year-old Colorado Springs boy was killed and his 8-year-old friend injured when a mound of sandy dirt tumbled and buried them while they were apparently trying to dig a cave.

Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph reporter Michelle Fulcher was named reporter of the year by the Colorado Springs Press Association.

50 years ago

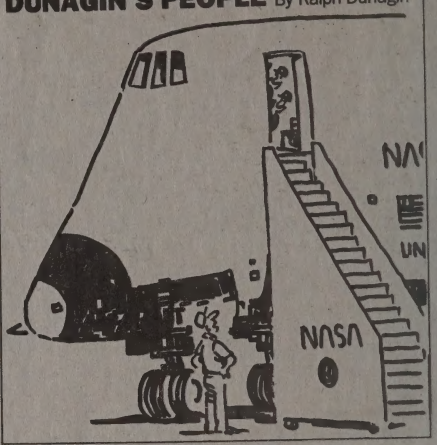
Earl G. Goodbar was elected president of the Colorado Springs board of education at a reorganization session at the administration building.

100 years ago

"Butch" Allen, a Cripple Creek gambler who could not pay his fine, was sent to the county jail for 30 days.

Compiled by the Gazette Telegraph research-center staff from past issues of the GT.

DUNAGIN'S PEOPLE By Ralph Dunagin



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RELIGION AND POLITICS

■ Which Constitution is letter writer Judy Miller following? According to my Constitution, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The U.S. Constitution was not founded on Chris-

the left that one can barely see those rights from the center.

CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

■ In its complimentary report on Clinton's first 100 days, the Associated Press informs readers this is the first cabinet in which white males constitute a minority. The story did not mention the fact that among his cabinet and political appointees are a high number of millionaires and wealthy men and women who acquired their substantial nest eggs during the '80s, a period that Clinton describes as the decade of personal greed and selfishness. In accumulating their wealth, they were not subject to Clinton's soak-the-rich tax philosophy. It's a good bet that their financial assets are secure in personal shelters.

■ Former President Jimmy Carter, who wasn't too effective as president, looks better every day. At times, Clinton is extremely immature. His attempts at humor are based on facetious remarks to belittle others. I find him crude, and I wonder how world statesmen view him. Time will tell.

■ Bill Clinton's attempt to emulate the humor of President Kennedy fails miserably. Clinton doesn't

PROFILE

GT 6/9/93

Smiley N. Pool/Gazette Telegraph

Torie Osborn, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, meets the media Thursday at Poor Richard's.

Gay rights leader takes cause on road

By **Louis Aguilar**
Gazette Telegraph

Two weeks ago, Torie Osborn helped lead one of the largest marches in the nation's history. She has met with Bill Clinton, and her thoughts are now routinely sought after by the national media.

So, in riding her sudden national prominence as a gay rights leader and still buoyant from the Washington, D.C., march on April 25, Osborn felt it appropriate that the first place she visited after the march was the so-called "epicenter of hate" — Colorado Springs.

"It's really tough to be in the belly of the monster," the head of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force said at a press conference Thursday.

"To be in the place that is home to so many of the think tanks that are generating the myths and hate of gays and lesbians is very strange.

"I applaud every gay and lesbian who is 'out' in this very, very tough environment. It's tougher to do that than what Bill Clinton is doing about the ban in the military."

Osborn realizes she has become a national gay rights leader at a time when the notion of gay rights has come out of the closet. The march in Washington — in which participants numbered anywhere from 300,000 to 1 million — was an unprecedented display of strength and unity for a group long considered on the political fringe.

See **GAY RIGHTS**/B3

service and has sometimes resulted in days-long power outages. And as the area continues to grow, the need for more electrical capacity will increase, they say.

Since January, PSC, its environmental consultants and citizens have been meeting to discuss possible routes. They have identified four possible corridors through Teller and Park counties through which the line could run. Where the line is located within those 1- to 1½-mile-wide corridors is still to be decided, and that decision will hinge at least in part on residents' exhaustive. We try to involve the property owners in the planning process." The U.S. Forest Service and Park and Teller counties also will need to give approval to PSC.

A decision on final routes will be made this summer, with project completion in late 1995.

Kaelin said because of possible health problems presented by the lines, prudent long-range planning is vital.

"One wrongful death suit could be devastating," she said. "So far, PSC has bent over backwards to listen to us. If just one life is saved, it'll be worth it."

Hearing scheduled for bribery suspect

Gazette Telegraph

A preliminary hearing has been set for a Colorado Springs man accused of trying to bribe the Manitou Springs mayor to convince residents of that city to back legalized gambling.

Ho S. Park, in county jail under a $1 million bond, will appear in court June 10. On Thursday, he changed his mind about seeking a reduction in his bond.

Park, 53, also is being investigated for allegedly tyring to hire someone to kill Manitou Mayor Dan Wecks.

Park's co-defendant and wife Pyong Park, also 53, is in the county jail under a $250,000 bond.

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